



Complete Agenda

Democratic Services
Swyddfa'r Cyngor
CAERNARFON
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Meeting

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time

10.30 am, THURSDAY, 16TH FEBRUARY, 2017

Location

Siambr Hywel Dda, Council Offices, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL55 1SH

Contact Point

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(DISTRIBUTED 08/02/17)

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP (18)

Plaid Cymru (9)

Councillors

Elwyn Edwards
Dyfrig Jones
Gethin Glyn Williams

Aled Wyn Jones
Gweno Glyn
John Wyn Williams

Charles Wyn Jones
Michael Sol Owen
R. H. Wyn Williams

Independent (5)

Councillors

Lesley Day
W. Roy Owen
Hefin Underwood

Trevor Edwards
Eirwyn Williams

Llais Gwynedd (2)

Councillors

Jason Humphreys

Anwen J. Davies

Liberal Democrats (1)

Councillor June Marshall

Individual Member (1)

Councillor Gwynfor Edwards

Ex-officio Members

Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council

Other invited members

Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member for Customer Care) – items 5 and 6

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declaration of personal interest.

3. URGENT ITEMS

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chairman for consideration.

4. MINUTES

4 - 7

The Chairman shall propose that the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 20th October, 2016 be signed as a true record.

5. GALW GWYNEDD AND RESPONDING TO PHONE CALLS

8 - 11

To consider the report of the Cabinet Member for Customer Care and the Galw Gwynedd, Siop Gwynedd and Registration Manager (attached).

6. SELF SERVICE PROJECT

12 - 21

To consider the report of the Cabinet Member for Customer Care and the Self-service Project Manager (attached).

7. SIMPLE LANGUAGE

22 - 23

To consider the report of the Simple Language Scrutiny Investigation Group (attached).

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 20/10/16

Present: Councillor Jason Humphreys (Chair);
Councillor W. Roy Owen (Vice-chair).

Councillors:- Anwen J. Davies, Lesley Day, Elwyn Edwards, Gweno Glyn, Aled Wyn Jones, Charles W. Jones, June Marshall, Michael Sol Owen, Eirwyn Williams, Gethin Glyn Williams, John Wyn Williams and R.H. Wyn Williams.

Officers present: Vera Jones (Democratic Services Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Present for item 3 below:-

Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn (Deputy Leader)
Councillor Peredur Jenkins (Cabinet Member for Resources)
Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies (Cabinet Member for the Economy and Community)

Present for item 4 below:-

Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies (Cabinet Member for the Economy and Community)
Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department)
Geraint George (Special Projects Leader)
Arwel E. Jones (Senior Manager Corporate Support)
Arwel Evans (Corporate Procurement Manager)
Nia Pritchard Griffith (Category Specialist)
Huw Griffiths (Business Liaison Co-ordinator)
Colin Morris (Business Support Manager)

Present for item 5 below:-

Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department)
Dewi Morgan (Revenue and Risk Senior Manager)

Apologies: Councillors Trevor Edwards and Hefin Underwood.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Gethin Glyn Williams declared a personal interest in item 7 on the agenda - Council Tax Premium on Long-Term Empty Homes and Second Homes, as close members of his family owned holiday homes.

The member was of the opinion that this was a prejudicial interest, and he withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 16 June 2016, as a true record.

3. OVERVIEW OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE 2015/16

Submitted - the Leader's report which provided an overview of the Council's performance thus far in 2015/16 in the fields of Effective and Efficient Council and Financial Planning, as well as the Keeping the Benefits Local Project.

The three relevant Cabinet Members were invited to expand individually on the different projects that were part of their portfolios, and they also responded to questions / observations from the members.

The Chair summarised the main conclusions of the discussion as follows:-

- More information should be received from the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Leisure regarding what took place in terms of engaging with children and young people (if at all).
- It was recommended that the Engagement Team considered using different engagement methods rather than constantly using the same people.
- The scrutinisers looked forward to the pilot with the new scrutiny performance arrangements.
- It was suggested that perhaps a progress report on EDRMS should be requested, i.e. in terms of whether more information was being shared, more space released to avoid duplication and more financial savings realised.

4. REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE KEEPING THE BENEFITS LOCAL STRATEGIC PLAN

Submitted - the report of the Corporate Procurement Manager on the progress of the Keeping the Benefits Local Strategic Plan following a request from this committee to receive an update on the progress of implementing new arrangements for procurement.

The Cabinet Member was invited to say a few words at the start before the committee considered the report per sub-heading, namely:-

- A. Category Management - People Category
- B. Category Management across the Council
- C. Keeping the Benefits Local

The Cabinet Member and officers expanded on the written responses in the report, and also responded to further questions / observations from the members. During the discussion:-

- It was noted that there was room to raise awareness with other agencies of the work that was being undertaken in terms of direct payments so that they could assist (e.g. Age Cymru).
- It was noted that scrutinisers supported and recommended that the University's observations should be built upon in order to maintain and build relationships with companies that had not been successful with tenders so that they could learn lessons and prepare better for the future.
- Work undertaken with 'major companies' to identify the possibilities of 'sub-contracting' to smaller companies locally was appreciated as this was a way of employing locally with major companies taking the financial risk.

The Chair summarised the main conclusions of the discussion as follows:-

- Although responsibilities had been shared across the Council in the field of category management and that everyone had 'bought into' this principle, further scrutiny would be required within about 6-9 months to ascertain whether serious responsibility was taken at the implementation stage.
- It was questioned whether local companies sufficiently prepared in advance, and whether local companies had enough time to prepare. In light of this, there was a need to monitor the situation to see whether a live contracts programme was being maintained, updated and shared. Again, this would be reviewed within 6-9 months of establishing the new category management teams.
- It was appreciated that category management would improve the quality of upcoming work and that this would be bound into future contracts as there was more expertise in writing contracts within the Council. However, there was a need to keep an eye on what was really taking place with this in order to see whether quality existed at grass roots' level. Specifically, it should be enquired within a reasonable time whether a reduction was seen in the number of contracts which had problems that needed to be resolved as tendering arrangements were weak.

5. COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM ON LONG-TERM EMPTY HOMES AND SECOND HOMES

Submitted - the report of the Head of Finance Department giving the committee an opportunity to consider the benefits and risks of raising a Council Tax premium on long-terms empty homes and second homes.

As the public consultation would remain open until 4 November, it was explained that it was therefore very difficult to fully scrutinise the matter at this meeting. Due to this, it was arranged to scrutinise the matter further on 21 November, whether it would be in the form of a Scrutiny Workshop or a special meeting of the committee.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer their observations. During the discussion:-

- It was recommended that the Cabinet needed to consider how best to use the additional funding that would be collected if the premium was raised. It was accepted that the new Council's hands should not be tied and that the democratic process needed to happen with the new Council, especially in light of the fact that we did not know what the Council's financial position would be by 2017/18, but consideration should be given to earmarking some of the money to:-
 - Assist the owners of empty houses to repair property so that they could bring them back into use as residences.
 - Consider investing in posts in order to ensure income tax for the Council by strengthening the Council's inspection arrangements to verify the validity of statements from owners of properties that were not second homes or empty any more.

- It was noted that raising the premium on a gradual basis every year should be considered (e.g. 25% in year 1, 50% in year 2, etc. and that it was not too much of a 'shock' and so that a smaller number considered transferring to the business rates.
- The opinion was expressed that the percentage should not be too high, in case too many would be forced to transfer to the business rates system, and so that there would be an opportunity during the first year / years to see what impact it had in other authorities that had already introduced a premium, and to adapt as we proceeded.
- To the contrary, it was suggested that a higher premium should be raised from the start as there would be 'compensation' if some would move to the non-domestic rates system.

RESOLVED to reconvene the Holiday Homes and Taxes Scrutiny Investigation Group on the morning of 21 November to fully scrutinise the matter following receipt of the results of the public consultation and to submit recommendations to the Cabinet on 22 November.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.50 pm

CHAIRMAN

Agenda Item 5

MEETING	Corporate Scrutiny Committee
DATE	16 February, 2017
TITLE	Galw Gwynedd and responding to phone calls
AUTHOR	Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member for Customer Care) and Joanne Parry (Galw Gwynedd, Siop Gwynedd and Registration Manager)

Background

Galw Gwynedd was established in 2008 to try to simplify and improve the Council's performance on answering the telephone. Before establishing Galw Gwynedd, Gwynedd residents had to phone 4 different switchboard numbers to contact Gwynedd Council, around 78% of those calls were answered but were then transferred to other extensions within the Council to receive attention. By now, there is only one number for customers to use to contact the Council and staff at Galw Gwynedd can deal with approximately 38% of the calls coming through 01766 771000 directly with the remainder being transferred to officers within the services to deal with.

The Scrutiny Committee's Questions

Here are the answers to the specific questions raised in advance by the Scrutiny Committee.

What is the latest performance data for answering calls at a) Galw Gwynedd and b) the Council's departments generally?

- a. **Galw Gwynedd** – Over the years, Galw Gwynedd's performance has been fairly consistent, with 85% of calls being answered within 15 seconds between 2008 and 2012. In 2013 there was a deterioration in the performance with 80% of calls being answered within 15 seconds. Performance has slipped substantially from then, but, although performance has slipped, 89% of the calls coming into Galw Gwynedd are answered.

	% answered within 15 seconds	% answered	average answer time	% calls aban
Performance 2011/2012- 31/12/2012	84.59	98%	00:09	1.94%
Performance 2013/2014 - 31/12/2013	80.79	97%	00:17	2.52%
Perfformiad 2014/2015 - 31/12/2014	70.41	95%	00:27	5.15%
Perfformiad 2015/2016 - 31/12/2015	57.67	93%	00:40	6.66%
Perfformiad 2016/2017 - 31/12/2016	46.15	89%	00:58	10.55%

- b. **Calls across the Council** – The number of telephone calls coming directly to officers’ individual extensions from outside of the Council has reduced since establishing Galw Gwynedd in 2008. This is not unexpected with the move to one main number and the greater emphasis over time on contacting through e-mail and the Council website. In 2011/12 770,702 external calls were received outside of Galw Gwynedd, in 2015/16 this figure had reduced to 540,553, but performance has also fallen with 26.8% of calls being lost by now.

		% answered within 15 seconds	% answered after 15 seconds	% calls abandoned
2011/12	Council Services	73%	5%	22.26%
2014/15	Council Services	72%	5%	22.56%
2015/16	Council Services	69%	6%	24.92%
2016/17	Council Services	65%	8%	26.80%

2. **Has any deterioration in performance on answering the phones been anticipated following recent changes? What plans does the service have to improve performance?**

During 2014, a decision was taken, on the basis of what was happening at other Council Contact Centres across Wales to change the response target. The aim was to answer calls on average within 40 seconds This was on the basis of research done by another council in wales showing evidence that customers were happy with an average response time of 60 seconds. By the end of 2015, Galw Gwynedd were reaching the target of responding within 40 seconds but, during 2016, performance has deteriorated substantially.

Following a deterioration in the performance on answering phones during 2016, we have been working to identify what has caused the deterioration. Several things have come to prominence so far.

1. 01766 771000 appears as the telephone number phoning the customer when anyone of the Council’s staff make an external telephone call.
2. Decisions regarding cuts in the following areas; Grass Cutting, the Closure of Public Toilets, changes in the arrangements for collecting Garden Waste all causing a number of people to call to complain.
3. The deterioration in the Council’s general telephone performance means that it does affect the performance of Galw Gwynedd, e.g. asking customers to phone back if there is no response, the line is busy, staff have not transferred their extensions to other officers when they are out of the office.

4. Turnover and vacant posts at Galw Gwynedd mean inadequate staff available to work extra hours when call volumes are higher than usual. Training a new member of staff can take between 6 months and a year until they are completely proficient in the work.

In terms of plans to respond to the situation, there are several things in hand:-

- Implementing a flexible system where, at busy times, Siop Gwynedd staff can respond to calls when the numbers awaiting a reply is too great
- Changing the system whereby 01766 771000 appears as the number when a customer is called. This has now been operational for a week and it is too early to report on concrete results but this should lead to fewer calls coming into Galw Gwynedd enabling better customer service, as enquiries get to the actual officers who deal with the matters.
- The development of the Self Service system is one important answer for the future to enable residents to gain access to services themselves without the need for telephone contact. There is another report before the committee on that issue but, in terms of its impact on Galw Gwynedd, it is likely that we will have to wait a little time before we see the development bearing fruit.
- Since performance has deteriorated in the meantime and is in danger of remaining so for a period at least, I have agreed, as Cabinet Member, with the Head of Corporate Services, that we take temporary steps to increase Galw Gwynedd's staffing levels for a period until we see an improvement in the performance.

3. Is there data available on the amount of time it takes to answer calls at Galw Gwynedd? Has consideration been given to having a system to inform customers how long they will have to wait?

The data on the average call response time has been given above but, of course the average time does not tell the full story. At busy times, particularly if there are periods that coincide with staffing difficulties, the response times can be unacceptably high.

We have been considering a system that could help us in this respect but there is no conclusion yet about what would be the best solution for our customers.

4. The data probably shows that some periods are busier than others – How does the service cope with these busy periods?

There is a pattern of variation in terms of call pressures. Usually, Monday, Tuesday and Friday afternoons are busier than the rest of the week and we know about the busy periods of the year for some kinds of calls, such as calls for Post-16 Education travel tickets at the start of every school term, annual parking tickets during March, in addition to calls about rates and benefits, and we organise our rota to address those.

There are other matters that impact on demand e.g. introducing changes such as introducing charges for garden waste collection and changing to three weekly collections. Usually, we discuss with the relevant service and, usually, there is agreement on a price for the additional temporary pressure on Galw Gwynedd that is addressed as part of the project cost. This is a temporary cost but is important in terms of helping the public to cope with change.

The final example that causes a problem for us is when some change has been implemented (such as introducing a cut or efficiency saving) where the relevant service has not foreseen the need to plan a response and Galw Gwynedd receives unanticipated calls. We try to hold a regular dialogue with services to foresee such cases but, by the end of November, Galw Gwynedd has received 15,356 more calls during 2016 than during the same period in 2015.

5. The scrutiny committee is also looking at the Self Service project during this meeting. How will the progress of that project help Galw Gwynedd?

As previously mentioned, the long term impact of the project is certain to be of benefit in reducing the number of calls coming in to Galw Gwynedd. However, this could take time and, in the meantime, the staff at Galw Gwynedd are part of the project of promoting this development by offering to help residents to set up self service accounts over the coming months.

Agenda Item 6

MEETING	Corporate Scrutiny Committee
DATE	16 February, 2017
TITLE	Self-service Project
AUTHOR	Councillor Ioan Thomas (Customer Care Cabinet Member) and Eleri Williams (Self-service Project Manager)

Background

An increasing number of customers expect to be able to contact the Council to request a service or find information at a time that is convenient for them, which is usually outside the traditional 09:00-17:00 office hours.

Despite having to face significant savings over the next few years, the Council will continue to deliver the majority of services to customers. Offering as much as possible of those services through self-service will improve the experience and service for the customer, will be more cost effective and will therefore give residents better value for money.

Gwynedd Council has therefore committed to undertake a self-service project that will change the current pattern of service provision for customers in future, and will encourage customers to use self-service.

The Scrutiny Committee's Questions

Here are the answers to specific questions raised in advance by the Scrutiny Committee.

- I. **Explain what the self-service project is and the work programme for the project. What progress has the project made so far?**

The aim of the self-service project is:

1. To give the customer a choice of how to contact the Council with a request for service.
2. To encourage the customer to create a self-service account – 'My Account' – in order to make applications for services electronically as it will offer them a better service, and will be a cheaper method of providing the Council's services.

The GOV.UK website announced their processing costs for booking a driving test online in 2015-16:

£6.62 – face to face

£4.11 – phone

£0.22 – the web

Even though these costs cannot be used to set savings targets for Gwynedd Council, they do highlight why it's essential that we as a Council try to guide as many customers as possible away from phone and face-to-face, to online contact.

3. To enable customers to track their applications for services meaning they will not need to phone / call in to receive an update on their applications.
4. To enable customers to gain access to all of the Council's electronic services by logging in once – referred to as 'single sign-on', i.e. they will not need to have different log in details for every service the Council has to offer.

In order to achieve these aims we are:

1. Developing a new Customer Relationship Management System internally, that will replace the current system (SIEBEL).
2. Intending to redirect Galw Gwynedd staff's time to enable the promotion of self-service and deal with self-service enquiries over the phone and using 'web chat'.
3. Intending to redirect Siopau Gwynedd staff's time to be more interactive with customers and to encourage them to use self-service either at home or via assisted digital (assisted by customer advisors) in Siopau Gwynedd.
4. Intending to market the services in a way that's appropriate for the target audience.

The Project's work programme

There are 7 main elements to the work programme:

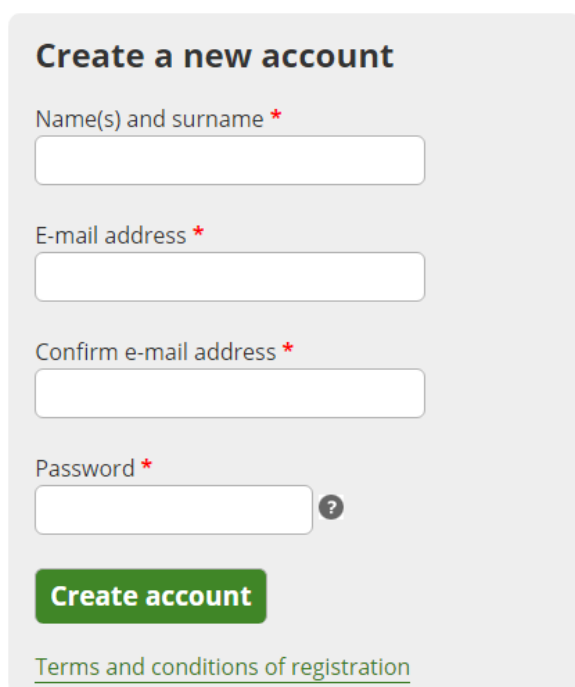
1. Develop a new Customer Relationship Management System step by step as new online services are introduced.
2. Transfer all of the present processes that are available over the phone in Galw Gwynedd to the new Customer Relationship Management System and in doing so, ensure that every process suited to self-service is introduced online.
3. Transfer self-service forms available on the website but not linked to 'My Account', into 'My Account', enabling customers to track their requests for service (some of the present forms will be deleted from the website if deemed unnecessary having assessed whether they are still relevant).
4. Develop new self-service forms in 'My Account', e.g. Garden waste collection application.
5. Connect 'My Account' to external systems providing self-service, where it is more cost effective to so rather than developing an internal system, e.g. a system for joining Leisure Centres and hiring sessions at Leisure Centres.
6. Provide guidance for Galw Gwynedd and Siopau Gwynedd staff on how to encourage self-service and assist customers to create accounts.
7. Targeted marketing of services, i.e. market in a way that is relevant to the target audience.

The new services to be introduced over the next few months are:

1. Scaffold application for businesses
2. Skip application for businesses
3. Order recycling and waste equipment
4. Enquire / complain about the waste and recycling service
5. Report a missed recycling / waste collection
6. Order a bulky waste collection
7. Join a Leisure Centre
8. Book a session at a Leisure Centre
9. Pay for school lunch
10. Apply for school admissions
11. Apply for a school transfer
12. Report highway problems , e.g. broken street light, potholes, broken pavement

The project's progress to date

1. New Customer Relationship Management System has been developed and is now live
 - i. back office system for self-service online
 - ii. operational in Siopau Gwynedd and Galw Gwynedd for recording service requests
 - iii. back office system for new online processes, e.g. garden waste collection requests
2. Creating an account 'My Account' has been simplified and is now live
 - i. You only need a name, e-mail address and password to create an account



Create a new account

Name(s) and surname *

E-mail address *

Confirm e-mail address *

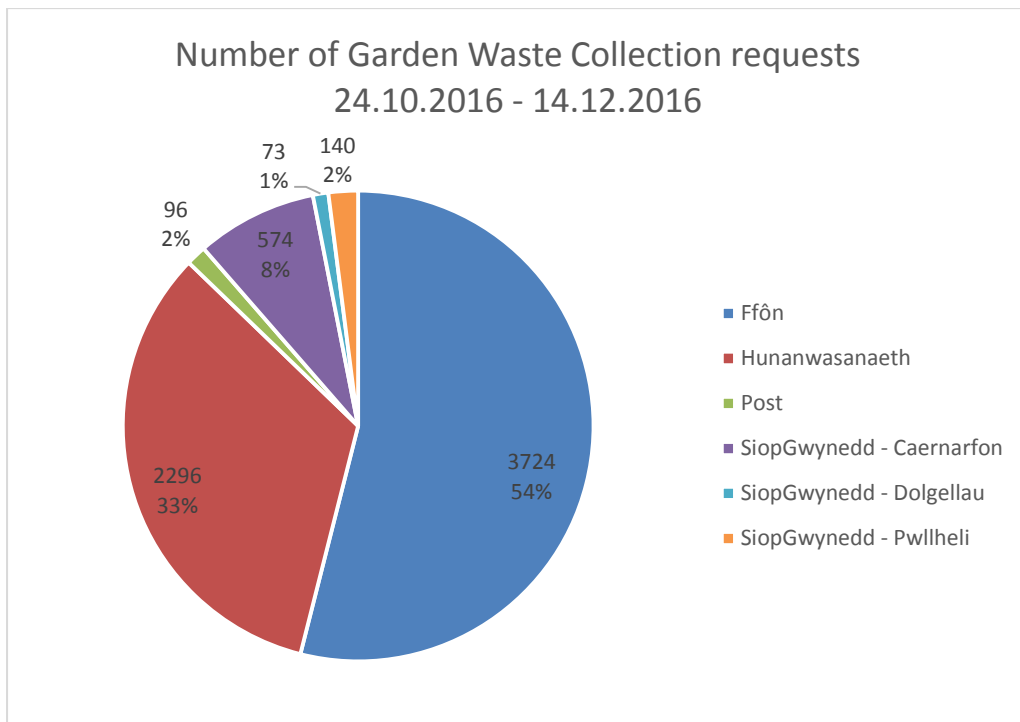
Password *

 ?

Create account

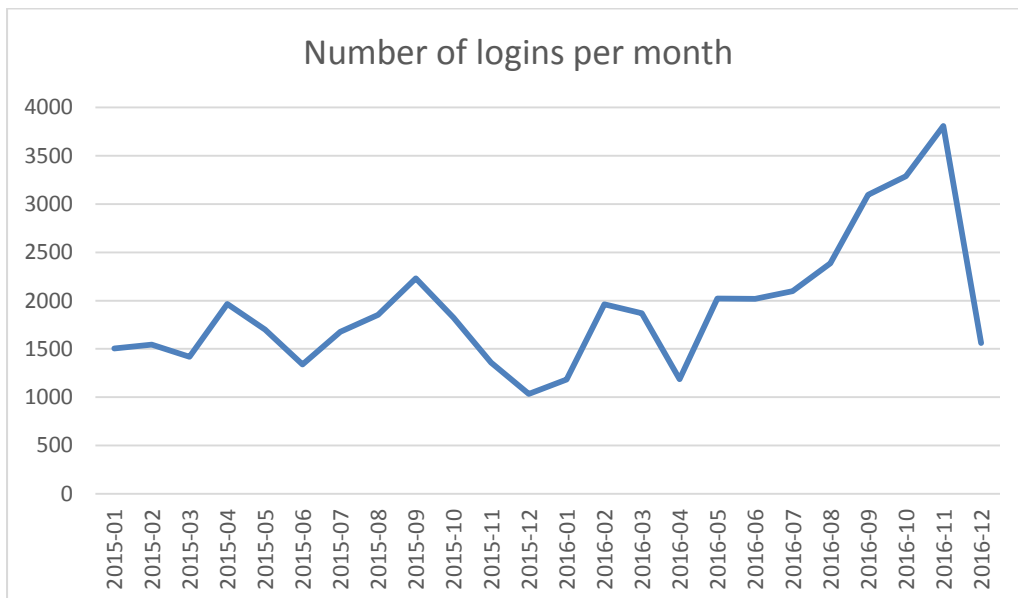
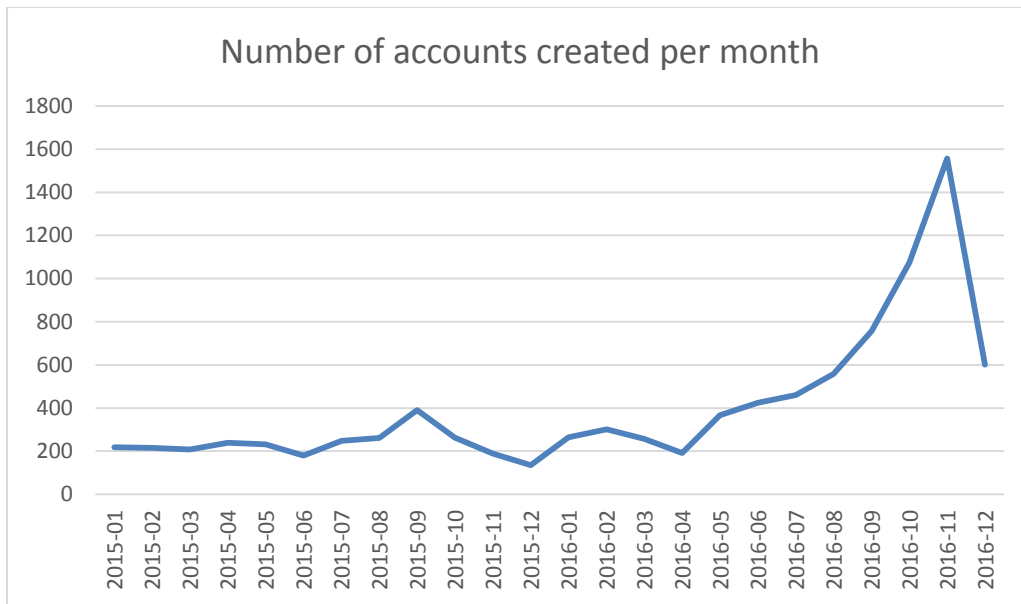
[Terms and conditions of registration](#)

- The first process using the new CRM – Ordering and paying for a Garden Waste Collection – went live on 24 October 2016



- The number of self-service accounts in the period since introducing the first process using the new CRM has increased

- Number of accounts before 24 October 2016: 22647**
- Number of new accounts created between 24 October 2016 – 14 December 2016: 2828**
- Total accounts on 14 December 2016: 25475**
- Number of logins 24.10.2016 – 14.12.2016: 6774**



II. What is the aim for increasing the use of self-service?

The main emphasis at the moment is to improve customer care.

The end goal is to ensure that every service that is suitable for self-service and is possible to introduce will be available on the Council website. This will take some time to achieve.

At the beginning of the project, the main criteria for prioritising which services should be introduced online are:

1. Is the target audience for the service in question likely to use self-service without the need for much encouragement

2. Are we likely to see a significant percentage of the target audience shifting from the present method of requesting a service to the self-service method

We will not be setting a target for shifting customers to self-service across all services in general, e.g. 50% of all the Council's requests for service submitted via self-service. We will work with the Departments offering the services to set targets per process, based on the process and the audience using the process.

Over a period of time, the type of services that will naturally attract a self-service audience will diminish, and target customers will require more encouragement to shift to the digital channel through marketing, changing customers' and the Council's culture and digital assistance to create accounts and submit requests.

III. **How will you measure success?**

These are the main measures identified:

- Number of customers using self-service
- Number of returning customers using self-service
- Customer satisfaction
- Number of services on offer to customers
- Number of customers shifting from other channels to self-service
- Number of service requests Galw Gwynedd and Siopau Gwynedd can redirect to the digital channel
- Can the services make and realise savings

Many authorities have set a specific savings target for the complete self-service project, without a firm basis for setting those targets. We don't intend to do that at the outset of the project in Gwynedd, as our emphasis is firstly on improving customer service. We will be looking at savings that can be delivered per process rather than setting a target for the project as a whole.

We will also collect managerial data, e.g. number of new accounts created, number of logins, and number of requests submitted via the three channels, in order to assess success.

IV. How many services can be accessed through the digital channel to date (up to 38 services have been noted in the strategic plan)

At present, most of the self-service forms on the Council's website exist independently of 'My Account', i.e. the customer does not have to have a self-service account to be able to submit a request for that service.

In order to improve customer care, and enable the customer to track their submission (thereby avoiding a situation where the customer has to phone or call in to receive an update on their application having originally submitted it online), all self-service forms on the Council's website must exist within 'My Account'.

The current situation is:

1. 42 electronic forms online which **don't need** a customer account ('My Account') to complete, which **does not allow** the customer to track updates to their submission – across a range of services
2. 20 electronic forms online which **do need** a customer account ('My Account') to complete, which **does allow** the customer to track updates to their submission - Planning, Pest Control and Dogs, 16+ Travel Pass, Ordering bins and recycling equipment
3. Pay Council Tax, Business Rates, Private Housing Rent and Invoices
4. A 'Where I live' system providing information for customers about services in their local area, e.g. their waste collection day, their local Councillor
5. A benefits application, benefits calculator and change of circumstances system.
6. A library system for ordering and renewing books
7. An online job application system
8. A system providing information about school / library closures in an emergency, e.g. bad weather
9. Other systems providing information: licensing register, archives catalogue, rights of way register

V. A business plan has been created in order to develop the self-service system ourselves rather than buying off the shelf – what are the implications of doing this?

1. We are ensuring that there aren't any problems with delivering services bilingually, which can often be problematic with off the shelf systems.

2. It gives us the flexibility to develop the services that our customers in Gwynedd need. We aren't forced to introduce those services provided by the off the shelf system alone, e.g. We looked at one system – Agilysis – where the main service provided by the system was housing services. Gwynedd Council wouldn't have made any use of this part of the system, as the service has been outsourced.

Such companies wouldn't develop specific services for Gwynedd Council. They regularly ask

their customers about their development needs and decide on a service development programme based on the majority's priorities. This could again mean that we would not use the services developed as a Council.

3. At the outset, developing our own system to replace SIEBEL results in more technical development work, but this work will decrease and take less time as more and more functions are developed within the new system.

VI. What results for the people of Gwynedd are likely to derive from the project?

1. It will enable customers to submit service requests to the Council using their chosen channel.
2. It will enable customers to submit service requests to the Council and track updates to their requests at their convenience.
3. It will enable customers to keep a record of their requests for services to the Council and a record of the Council's response, all in one place in 'My Account'.
4. Access to all of the Council's digital services will be quick and easy because they will only need to log in once to gain access to all the services available.
5. People may benefit from using self-service in future, as the costs for providing services will decrease for the Council.

VII. What plans do you have for communicating these opportunities with the public?

1. Marketing every process / new form individually with the target audience. The type of marketing will vary from process to process and from audience to audience. We will be working with the relevant Services and the Communications Unit on individual marketing plans.
2. Freeing up time for Galw Gwynedd's staff (by offering the services available over the phone through self-service), in order to promote self-service during phone calls to the contact centre,
e.g. at the end of the call where the process is available online, they will make the customer aware of that and offer to create an account for them on the phone, so that next time the customer can self-serve.
3. Siopau Gwynedd staff will walk the shop floor approaching customers to find out which service they need. If it's something that can be done online and the customer is willing to self-serve in future, the staff will submit the request for them on this occasion showing them how to do so and will help create an account for them, so that they can self-serve next time.
4. Departments should encourage customers to submit an online application rather than encouraging the use of any other channel.

5. We will work with the Digital Gwynedd project staff in order to promote the use of the internet in general, and make the most of opportunities to raise customers' awareness of the online services available on Gwynedd Council's website.
6. When a substantial number of services are available in 'My Account' we will work with the Communications Unit on a marketing plan to promote 'My Account' in general, in addition to marketing specific services. This is likely to begin during the autumn of 2017.
7. Raising awareness of staff about the online services available on the Council's website using internal communication channels, so that they use them themselves and tell their friends and family.
8. Raising awareness of Members about the online services available using relevant communication channels, so that they use them themselves and make residents aware when opportunities arise.

VIII. What problems have arisen with the system to date, and how are you solving them?

No problems have arisen with the system so far. Because the system is being developed from scratch, the process of developing new processes can, currently, be slow at times because new functions need to be developed, e.g. the ability to have a tracked conversation between the customer and a Service. Following the initial period, when the main functions will be in place, it will take less time to develop new processes / forms.

The main problems with the project to date are:

1. **Lack of commitment by services to ensure the project is delivered on schedule**
 In order to improve this we intend to draw up an action plan for each individual project. We will explain the plan to the relevant Service beforehand to ensure their agreement and commitment before moving on.
 We also intend to attend one of the senior managers' meetings to explain the purpose and implications of the project.
2. **Opposition to single sign-on policy**
 The Services see it as a barrier and want to carry out their own individual projects, without taking into consideration what's important to the customer, namely that Gwynedd Council is one service provider and therefore you should only need one login to access all services.
 In an attempt to appease this opposition, we intend to attend one of the senior managers' meetings to explain why the policy exists, and the implications of non-compliance on the project as a whole.
3. **External companies we work with can cause problems and disrupt the project's timetable for delivery**
 e.g. 'Gladstone' - the company that provides the system for leisure self-service

doesn't currently integrate with the payment system that we use. Trying to get the company to do so is a laborious process and adds unforeseen time to the project.

Agenda Item 7

MEETING	Corporate Scrutiny Committee
DATE	16 February 2017
SUBJECT	Simple language
AUTHOR	Councillors John Wyn Williams and R.H.Wyn Williams

1. Which subject was being considered?

The investigation group's task was to consider how simple and easy to understand the terminology used by the Council in questionnaires is.

We had decided to look at this issue following previous work with the Gwynedd Engagement Group that identified that one of the weaknesses of the Gwynedd Challenge questionnaire was that sections of the questionnaire used complicated language and too much 'Council terminology'. This was true in both Welsh and English versions.

The group hoped to identify steps to assist officers to improve the quality of questionnaires and make them clearer to the people who were answering them.

2. What did the group do?

- a) Understand what is happening now.

The group spoke with Sion Gwynfryn Williams (Communication and Engagement Manager) and Jen Rao (Engagement Officer), to understand the system that currently exists within the Council when creating questionnaires.

Sion and Jen explained that they and their team were responsible for helping to create the Council's main questionnaires. They also explained that they did not have enough staff to support every piece of work, and a vast number of questionnaires were created by officers in the various departments.

- b) Speak with experts on clear language.

The group also decided to speak with experts from Canolfan Bedwyr in Bangor. Dr Llion Jones (Director, Canolfan Bedwyr) and Eleri Hughes (Principal Language Tutor, Canolfan Bedwyr) were able to share some of the main principles of Cymraeg Clir and Plain English.

- Use 'us' (Gwynedd Council) and 'you' (the people of Gwynedd)
- Write to convey information and not to create an impression
- Do not use unnecessary clauses, e.g. "Save £59,396" rather than "Remove the maintenance budget and save £59,396".
- Keep sentences short – no more than 25 words (computer settings can be changed so that a sentence defined by Cysill as too long is reduced to fewer than 25 words [when writing in Welsh])
- Use simpler, more common vocabulary, 'day-to-day' words, e.g. "create" rather than "develop"; "roads" rather than "network of roads"; "other plans" rather than "alternative plans", "look after" rather than "maintain".
- Use less of the negative, e.g. if you do not register, you cannot vote > if you register, you can vote.
- Use less of the imperfect, e.g. over 300,000 journeys are made > there are over 300,000 journeys.

- Use a verb-noun / adjective rather than a noun, e.g. overgrowth > overgrown / growing wild.
- Use the long form of the verb, e.g. 'We are writing to you', rather than 'We're writing to you', as the contracted form of the verb can sometimes suggest that something will happen in the future.
- Use active sentences rather than passive sentences, e.g. That overgrowth would not be controlled > unable to control overgrowth, in order to make the piece more lively, direct and easier to understand.

c) Look at recent questionnaires

In order to ascertain whether or not each questionnaire published by the Council used complicated language, the group decided to look at some recent examples. The group concluded that the questionnaires were easy to understand on the whole, but that there was room for improvement in places.

- There was room to improve the layout so that the Welsh and English versions did not overlap.
- Parts of some questionnaires were informal, e.g. used words such as '*amdan*' in Welsh, and other parts were more formal, which suggests that more than one author worked on the questionnaire. It is important to ensure that the style is consistent throughout the entire document.
- There is room to consider the statements and their order, i.e. they should run from one extreme to another, i.e. Strongly agree / Agree / Don't know / Disagree / Strongly disagree / Not relevant.
- It is important that the authors of documents check translations carefully to ensure that the meaning of the original has been conveyed correctly and in full.

3. What are the conclusions of the work?

Everyone who was part of the work saw that there was room to use plainer language in a number of fields across the Council, e.g. when writing committee reports. Everyone also agreed that one field needed to be identified initially to make a difference, and a decision was made to focus on questionnaires.

The following steps were decided upon:

- That the Communication and Engagement Unit and Canolfan Bedwyr jointly develop short guidelines (no more than two sides of A4) for staff on how to create questionnaires in simple language. It was also decided that a list of words / phrases to avoid would be created.
- That Canolfan Bedwyr provides input into an in-house pack of guidelines for arranging public meetings, press statements, etc., that is currently being created.
- Hold a pilot of the questionnaire guidelines with a specific Council department to see whether or not any impact has been seen following its introduction, before consideration is given to establishing a more extensive plan.